

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 /069 W  
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R 141400Z NOV 77  
FM AMCONSUL PALERMO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2265  
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PFOR, IT, LY  
SUBJECT: SICILIAN VISIT TO LIBYA

REF: (A) PALERMO 0772, (B) PALERMO 0641 (NOTAL)

1. NOVEMBER 10 PALERMO PRESS REPORTS NOVEMBER 9 RETURN TO SICILY BY SPECIAL LIBYAN JET OF SICILIAN DELEGATION TO LIBYA LED BY REGIONAL PRESIDENT ANGELO BONFIGLIO (REFTEL).
2. A "JOINT COMMUNIQUE" ISSUED IN TRIPOLI DURING THE VISIT REPORTEDLY STATES THAT THE TWO SIDES AGREED TO A) CREATE A MIXED PUBLIC ORGANIZATION TO PROMOTE A STRONGER AND "PRIVILEGED" RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIBYA AND SICILY; B) STRENGTHEN CULTURAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SICILY AND LIBYA; AND C) PROMOTE INCREASED COOPERATION IN FISHING, AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY.
3. THE LOCAL PRESS REPORTS AT LENGTH ON THE WARMTH OF LIBYAN HOSPITALITY - BONFIGLIO WAS RECEIVED BY QADHAFI FOR (LESS THAN) TEN MINUTES DURING WHICH QADHAFI DWELT ON HISTORICAL TIES BETWEEN SICILY AND THE ARAB WORLD; REPORTEDLY STATING THAT "THERE EXIST BETWEEN US TIES OF BLOOD, SINCE OUR BLOOD

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WAS MIXED IN THE PAST". QADHAFI ALSO REPORTEDLY SAID THAT BOTH LIBYA AND SICILY "HAVE A SPECIAL INTEREST IN SEEING THE MEDITERRANEAN BECOME A PLACE OF COMMUNICATION FOR PEACE. IN THE PAST, THE MEDITERRANEAN HAS BEEN USED FOR UNWORTHY ENDS, BUT THIS IS WRONG. WE MUST STRUGGLE FOR PEACE AND THE WELL-BEING OF THE MEDITERRANEAN NATIONS".

4. LOCAL PRESS ALSO TOOK SPECIAL NOTE OF QADHAFI'S INSISTENCE THAT "THESE MEETINGS LEAD TO CONCRETE RESULTS". SO FAR, HOWEVER, SUCH RESULTS ARE DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY, ALTHOUGH THE LIBYANS APPARENTLY PROMISED TO DISCUSS SICILIAN PROPOSALS FOR COMPETING IN PUBLIC WORKS AND OTHER PROJECTS AND FOR THE SALE OF SICILIAN PRODUCTS IN THE LIBYAN MARKET. LIBYAN PRIME MINISTER OBEDI WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SUGGESTED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUPS TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES IN THESE AREAS AND TO HAVE ASKED FOR INFORMATION ON LEADING SICILIAN INDUSTRIAL FIRMS "IN ORDER TO PERMIT THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PREFERENTIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SICILIAN EXPORTERS AND LIBYAN IMPORTERS".

5. KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCES HAVE SUGGESTED TO US THAT EXCEPT FOR THE ATMOSPHERICS, THE TALKS DID NOT SUCCEED IN ADVANCING SICILIAN-LIBYAN RELATIONS BEYOND WHERE THEY HAVE GONE OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. FOR EXAMPLE, DISCUSSION OF A JOINT FISHING ENTERPRISE HAS BEEN IN THE MILL FOR SOME TIME BUT HAS FOUNDERED ON LIBYAN INSISTENCE THAT LIBYAN TRAINEES BE INCLUDED AS CREW AND THAT ALL OF THE CATCH BE SOLD IN LIBYA AT PRICES SET BY THE GOL. A JOURNALIST WHO ACCOMPANIED BONFIGLIO SUGGESTED THAT SICILIANS WERE IMPRESSED IN TRIPOLI AND ELSEWHERE WITH EXISTING, FIERCE COMPETITION AMONG FOREIGN SUPPLIERS OF GOODS AND SERVICES TO THE LIBYAN MARKET. BONFIGLIO PRIVATELY MENTIONED SEVERALTIMES HIS FEAR THAT THE SICILIANS MAY HAVE "ALREADY ARRIVED TOO LATE".  
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6. ADDED FACTOR IN ABOVE IS CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION OF HOW FAR REGIONAL AUTHORITIES CAN GO IN SUCH "FOREIGN POLICY" EXCURSIONS. WHILE THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT PREVIOUSLY SCOTCHED A TOUR OF THE MAGHREB BY THE SICILIAN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT, A COMMUNIST (REF. B), ROME EVIDENTLY APPROVED BONFIGLIO'S LIBYAN VISIT SINCE A RECEPTION WAS REPORTEDLY HOSTED FOR HIM IN TRIPOLI BY THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR. THE QUESTION REMAINS, HOWEVER, OF HOW MUCH LATITUDE THE GOI WILL PERMIT THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT TO EXERCISE SHOULD RELATIONS BECOME MORE SUBSTANTIVE.

7. WHATEVER OF SUBSTANCE DEVELOPS FROM THE BONFIGLIO TRIP, WE REMAIN IMPRESSED BY THE CONSISTENCY OF LIBYAN EFFORTS AT MAKING THE SICILIANS FEEL SPECIAL, BAIT TO WHICH THE SICILIANS HAVE UNDERSTANDABLY RISEN IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES.  
COLLINS

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**TAGS:** PFOR, OTRA, SOPN, ETRD, ECIN, IT, LY  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009